

Radical Grace and the Economy

Module IV. Denial of Community

This is *Section IV* of the broader workbook called
Radical Grace and the Economy

This is a PDF file. It can be downloaded in the
usual manner, using File|Save or  Save.

Here's the first of 6 issues we'll discuss in this section:

Seeking Equilibrium

The extreme individualist stance of economic models
vs the balanced approach necessary to live rationally.

Go to
[Overview](#)
or to

[Table of Contents](#)

Issues

○ *Obsessively Individualist*

- ✓ Mainstream economic models are firmly individualist. They claim that all desires arise from inside the individual mind, uncreated and separate from other individual minds.

○ *Denial of Community*

- ✓ In such models, there's no such thing as community. Just individuals. But that defies our life experience, where we're normally brought up in families and learn through intense interaction the language of living in relation to each other. The choices we make are as much a response to community relationships as they are to individual impulse.

○ *Seeking a Balance*

- ✓ A healthy person strives for a balance — between actively caring for the well-being of family and community and seeking personal fulfillment of one's own individual goals.

Discussion Questions

1. **How can anyone make the assumption** that only individuals exist? Or do people do that unconsciously? How do you respond to the claim that there's no such thing as community?
2. **How did it come to pass** that so many people value nothing but individual freedom? How do we instill in them the need to balance their individual choices with their responsibility to the community?

Business in Community

The intermediary role that responsible business can play.

Issues

○ *Fable Doesn't Ring True*

- ✓ Individual businesses dealing with individual consumers does not a community make. Only in economic mythology does free competition in the marketplace turn a pack of self-seeking individuals into an actual community.

○ *Business and Community*

- ✓ But many business people don't fit into that narrow image. There's no shortage of generous and compassionate business people who temper their business interests with a deep caring for their community. Those in the business community who are immersed in the people they serve are an essential part of society's balance.

Discussion Questions

1. **There are many businesses that strive to serve the community.** How do they serve community and profit at the same time? When it works, why does it work?
2. **How has an ideology that reduces people** to unconnected individuals get such a grip on our culture, when it should be so obvious that we're steeped in community from day one?
3. **How do you deal with people who recognize only** their own individuality and dismiss community responsibility as oppressive?

The Franciscan Balance

The alternative balance of individual and community exhibited among Franciscans.

Issues

○ *The Call for Grace and Balance*

- ✓ People of the spirit know that the soul must be in balance. There's a place for individual expression and there's a place for communities of grace. Spiritual traditions around the world seek a proper balancing of individual pursuits with the interconnectedness of everything.

○ *The Franciscan Response*

- ✓ The Franciscan Order calls on members to temper their individual impulses with enough self-restraint to place their chief focus on service to the community. This merges with the Franciscan vocation of showing grace to the marginalized.

Discussion Questions

1. **Does Franciscan “self-denial” really mean** to lose yourself in the community, or is it really to find yourself? What new and different kind of balance does it represent?
2. **How do you personally strike that balance** between individual freedom and responsibility to community?

We Are All Family

The family and community orientation among Indigenous people.

Issues

○ *We are All Family*

- ✓ Indigenous people direct their loving and caring to the largest family of all — from kin, to community, to creatures of all kinds, to Mother Earth, to the Great Spirit. “We are all family.”

○ *Living in Community*

- ✓ One who puts individual interests above the larger community is a broken spirit in need of healing. Not that individual expression is absent. But it’s healthy when it seeks harmony and balance — harmony with creation and balance of interests. It’s a stark contrast with the competitive equilibrium of colonial culture.

Discussion Questions

1. **The indigenous Potlatch** — an elaborate celebration where leaders freely gave away possessions to those who had little — was outlawed for many decades in Canada. Why do you think the colonial authorities did that? What did it violate? What did it threaten?
2. **How do you personally seek that one-ness** up the chain of being— from yourself to kin to community to all creatures to Mother Earth to the Great Spirit?

Challenging Conventional Wisdom

The need to renew our old community sensibilities.

Issues

○ *Hard Core Individualism*

- ✓ Resurrecting community in the public mind is where conventional wisdom needs to be challenged. Hard core individualism — which claims that only atomistic individuals exist and community is just an abstraction — has been drilled into the minds of uncountable generations since “The Enlightenment”.

○ *Re-Education*

- ✓ People need to be educated about the need to balance individual autonomy against community values — to reveal the meaninglessness of disconnected individualism and awaken them to the importance of community in all our lives.

Discussion Questions

1. **How does mainstream culture make it difficult** to for us to get across the primacy of community in all our lives? How will they push back? What can we do to broaden that perspective?
2. **Where in that balance** — between an autonomous individual and a member of a community — do you personally lie?

Redirecting Priorities

The need for a radical policy shift.

Issues

○ *Turned on its Head*

- ✓ Economic policy needs to be turned on its head. It's based on the presumption that helping individuals and private corporations maximize their private gains will allow the market to work its magic.

○ *Corporate Welfare*

- ✓ Since that works only in theory, government steps in to prop up private gains with legal privileges and subsidies. Community endeavour is left to fend for itself.

○ *Help the Right People*

- ✓ The alternative is to redirect government support, the largesse that currently flows to the corporate sector — redirect it toward the cooperative and small-business sectors that are currently left with the crumbs under the corporate table.

Discussion Questions

1. **If the public just takes it for granted** that corporations must be given first privileges in our economy in order for them to create jobs, how do we argue that community and small business enterprise should be given that priority? How do we make that message credible to a well-programmed population?
2. **Can you see a future** when government largesse flows downward instead of upward? Is that viable?

This is Module IV. Denial of Community

Contents

Module links are to their discussion pages.

Overview

Modules

- I. Denial of Grace
- II. Denial of Vocation
- III. Denial of Abundance
- IV. Denial of Community
- V. Denial of the Individual
- VI. Denial of the Humble
- VII. Denial of Justice
- VIII. Denial of Mother Earth
- IX. Denial of Entitlement

*If links don't work
in your pdf viewer,
browse to one of
these:*

ov.radicalgrace.ca

i.radicalgrace.ca
ii.radicalgrace.ca
iii.radicalgrace.ca
iv.radicalgrace.ca
v.radicalgrace.ca
vi.radicalgrace.ca
vii.radicalgrace.ca
viii.radicalgrace.ca
ix.radicalgrace.ca